

ABSENCE FROM THE HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES

HON. ANDER CRENSHAW

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 26, 2007

Mr. CRENSHAW. Madam Speaker, I was unavoidably detained in my congressional district on Monday, September 24, 2007. I respectfully request the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD to reflect that, had I been present, I would have voted "yea" on rollcall vote No. 891 on motion to suspend the rules and pass House Concurrent Resolution 193; "yea" on rollcall vote No. 892 on motion to suspend the rules and pass House Resolution No. 668; "yea" on rollcall vote No. 893 on motion to suspend the rules and pass H.R. 1199 and "yea" on rollcall vote No. 894 on motion to suspend the rules and pass House Resolution 340.

COOPER-WOLF: THE SAFE
COMMISSION ACT

HON. FRANK R. WOLF

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 26, 2007

Mr. WOLF. Madam Speaker, I am deeply concerned about the financial future of our Nation. Yesterday, Representative JIM COOPER and I introduced the SAFE Commission Act, H.R. 3654, legislation that would establish a bipartisan commission to review Federal spending. Everything would be on the table—entitlements and tax policies—mandating Congress to vote up or down based on the commission's findings. Democrats and Republicans must work together to ensure that our country regains sound financial footing. I insert for the RECORD my statement from the press conference introducing the SAFE Commission Act.

Thank you for being here today. I am hopeful that by joining efforts with Jim Cooper, our colleagues in the House and Senate will embrace this bipartisan commission that can put our country on sound financial footing.

I also want to thank you, David Walker, for your vision and your courage in laying the groundwork for the legislation we offer today.

David and the others participating in the Fiscal Wake-up Tour—the Heritage Foundation, Brookings Institution, Concord Coalition, Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget—have been crisscrossing America from San Francisco to Cincinnati, from Tampa to Buffalo—laying out the facts about the future financial condition of our country, discussing possible options and preparing the way for tough choices that those of us in Congress are going to have to make.

When you look at this tour ensemble, you see groups who usually disagree more than they agree on policy issues. That makes it even more extraordinary that they all agree that we need to sit down and work together to make sure our country doesn't fall into a financial canyon that we can never climb out of. That's the message that is resonating with folks who hear them—the need to come together and work to find bipartisan answers to ensure a secure financial future for America.

What the tour has told us, too, is that we shouldn't underestimate the willingness and

ability of the American people to hear the truth and support the decisions necessary to change our financial course.

We owe it to our children and grandchildren to start the process today. We cannot continue to avoid our responsibility to future generations of Americans by passing on a broken system in the form of unfunded Social Security and Medicare and obligations and unsustainable spending. We cannot continue to keep borrowing and mortgaging our future to countries like China and Saudi Arabia that carry obscene amounts of our debt.

But the question is asked, why the SAFE Commission? If this is such a critical issue, shouldn't Congress deal with it?

Yes, it is a critical issue—maybe the most important one facing our country. And yes, it is the responsibility of elected officials to act.

Our financial issues are real. Our economic growth will come to a grinding halt, our standard of living and even our national security will be at risk if we don't start actively working to change our current course.

But I'm going to be candid—Congress on its own can't get it done in the politically charged atmosphere in Washington today. I describe Congress today as dysfunctional. The latest public opinion polls perhaps validate my assessment.

The American people expect us to put our partisan differences aside and work together to get things done. We must move beyond the politics and come to grips with the fact that the financial future of our country is an American issue. It's not red or blue or Republican or Democrat.

Under the SAFE Commission process, Congress is the ultimate decision-maker.

But it will be the SAFE Commission, after holding hearings across the country, listening to the American people, and putting everything on the table for discussion—entitlements and tax policies—which will send its recommendations to Congress for a mandatory up-or-down vote like the BRAC (The Base Closing Commission) process to decide what military bases to keep open or close.

Congress will be part of the SAFE process—has a place at the table. We even hold out hope that Congress could find its way and act on its own. First, at least four of the 14 congressionally appointed commission members must be sitting Members of Congress. Second, if Congress enacts significant legislation aimed at addressing this looming crisis, the SAFE Commission would terminate and cease to exist. We hope this happens, but, I doubt it will.

Abraham Lincoln once said, "You cannot escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today." I believe there is a moral component to this issue that goes to the heart of who we are as Americans. By that I mean, I wonder if we have lost the national will to make tough decisions that may require sacrifice?

The SAFE Commission offers us the opportunity to find our way forward to protect the future of our country.

My youngest grandchild is just over a year old. By the time he is 15 years old, 29 cents out of every dollar paid in income taxes will be required to cover the needs of Social Security and Medicare to pay for my retirement.

By the time he completes his undergraduate degree, more than 45 cents out of every dollar of income taxes then will be needed to cover the shortfall of Social Security and Medicare. That will rise to 62 cents out of every dollar if he decides to get his doctorate 10 years later.

Sadly, before he retires—and looks into the eyes of his own grandchildren—retired baby boomers will be consuming 88 percent of

every income tax dollar. With the baby boomers consuming so much, there will be little money left to meet the needs and challenges of future generations—for instance ensuring that our highways and bridges are safe, that there is money for cancer research and to solve the riddles of Parkinson's and Alzheimer's, that we can take care of our veterans, that we have the resources to ensure our schools are the best in the world so our children and grandchildren get the necessary tools, particularly in math and science, to compete in the world marketplace.

Is it right for one generation to live very well knowing that its debts will be left to be paid for by their children and grandchildren?

I'm challenging our colleagues today to come together—to know that while you served in Congress you did everything in your power to provide the kind of security and way of life for your children and grandchildren that your parents and grandparents worked so hard to provide for you.

The challenge, too, goes out to the leadership in Congress and the administration to make this a truly bipartisan effort and put the SAFE Commission on the fast track to enactment.

LEGALIZING INTERNET GAMBLING
WOULD HARM U.S. TRADE

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 26, 2007

Mr. TOWNS. Madam Speaker, as I stated here a couple of months ago, I believe very strongly that whatever our policy is on other types of gambling, we need to maintain a firm line against any form of sports gambling. Gambling on sports events undermines the integrity of American athletics. It can create corruption or the appearance of corruption, and it taints the image of sports as wholesome, family-friendly entertainment.

I also stated that I opposed legalization of online sports gambling in H.R. 2046. It is not enough to allow sports associations to say "not on my game" if Congress is sending the message to the public that sports gambling is fine. If we are going to consider any loosening of laws against online gambling, we need to say "not on sports, period."

But yesterday I received a letter from Stuart Eizenstat, a very well-respected trade expert who was formerly U.S. Ambassador to the European Union and Under Secretary of Commerce for International Trade, writing on behalf of the National Football League. Ambassador Eizenstat's letter informs me that, under the present circumstances, even "not on sports, period" could leave the NFL and other great American athletic institutions vulnerable to assault by the offshore gambling interests who want to make money off the popularity of these games.

According to Ambassador Eizenstat's letter, a law that legalizes most online gambling but includes limited exceptions, such as a sports gambling exception, will be vulnerable to attack in the World Trade Organization. If the WTO rules against the U.S. law, the U.S. would have to choose between eliminating the exception—feeding our treasured sports to the gambling wolves—or paying billions in compensation to our trading partners. I, for one, think we should avoid having to decide which of these is the lesser of two evils if we can.